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IN  
THE  
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יידן אין סאָוועטן־פארבאנד

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Solomon Rabinovich (born in 1904) is a veteran Soviet journalist. During World War II he was editor of an Army newspaper and won three orders for valour in battle. At present he works for the Novosti Press Agency.

Solomon Rabinovich is one of the authors of the book in Yiddish **This Is How We Live**. After he had made a trip to Israel the Soviet Jewish magazine **Sovietish Heimland** published his travel notes, which evoked great interest among Soviet and foreign readers.

In 1965 the Novosti Press Agency published a booklet by Rabinovich about the life of the Jews in the USSR, which was received with great interest abroad, so much so that we have now published a new booklet by the same author.

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SOLOMON RABINOVICH

**J  
EWS  
IN THE  
SOVIET  
UNION**

Novosti Press Agency Publishing House  
Moscow



*"To us our Motherland is the country  
where many generations of our people  
were born and died, where we ourselves  
were born, work and will die."*

*Mendele Moikher-Sforim*





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## *Yesterday and Today*

### A BIT OF HISTORY

Much has been written about the Jewish people, one of the most ancient in the world. In this booklet I should like to tell you how the Jews live in the USSR. But first—a bit of history.

The appearance of Jews on the territory of this country dates back to ancient times, when some settled in the Caucasus. In the Crimea Jews appeared in the Hellenic period and in Russia and Lithuania they appeared in about the 8th century. At the beginning of the 15th century Jewish communities were established in Byelorussia. In the history of Muscovite state the first mention of Jews dates back to 1471.

Up to the time of the invasion of Mongol-Tatars in the 13th century considerable numbers of Jews were massed in the South—in the Crimea, on the Caucasus and on the banks of the Volga, the Don and the Dnieper. After the

destruction of the Great Kiev Principality by the Tatars the larger part of the Jewish population fled to the West, where the Russian and Polish Jews came together.

After the partitioning of Poland in the 18th century Russia received areas traditionally inhabited by Jews. Officially they were given the "right to enjoy all advantages." But this "right" was never actually realized. Soon the Jews were subjected to special statutes, which laid down a host of restrictions, provisos and bans. Thus inequality was legalized and became one of the basic principles of tsarist policy on the Jews for over a century and a half.

But it must be understood that official anti-Semitism was by no means a specific Russian phenomenon—historical factors had brought it into existence long before Jews settled in Russia.

Back in ancient times, during the period of the Babylonian captivity there appeared the so-called Diaspora—Jewish settlements outside Palestine. In these settlements people worshipped Jehova—cult that differed in many ways from those of the peoples on whose territories the Diaspora settlements appeared. The Jewish rituals seemed alien and "unclean," arousing dislike and sometimes open hostility towards those who practised them.

With the advent of Christianity and the establishment of the church hostility towards Jews based on religious grounds assumed an organized character.

To prevent Jews "from influencing the Christians" the church systematically issued decrees aimed against Jews, spread stories about the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews and about Christian blood being used for their rituals.

But despite this superficial religious colouring anti-Semitism is primarily a social and economic phenomenon.

Deprived of their land and of their old mother country Jews settled almost exclusively in towns and became wholly

involved in trade relations and trade rivalry. True, they brought to the Diaspora countries their trading experience and contributed to economic development. At the same time their activity caused terrible hatred and condemnation. On the one hand, they were hated by the sections of the local population who found the transition to capitalist economic relations extremely difficult and painful and considered Jewish merchants and usurers to be their exploiters. On the other hand, anti-Semitism was fostered by the newly-emerging national bourgeoisie, which was afraid of competition. And as Jews were looked upon as foreigners and aliens everywhere it was easy for the rulers to blame them for any misfortunes and calamities that befell the country, so diverting from themselves the wrath of the great numbers of people they were exploiting. The ruling classes often allowed Jews to accumulate capital and then robbed them of it in the same way as one fills and empties a money-box.

In many countries religious and national intolerance became a trusty weapon of the bourgeois in his fight with his Jewish rival, and physical extermination of Jews—pogroms—became a favourite means of implementing state policy.

Following the motto of ancient Rome—"divide and rule"—tsarism fostered national discord and hatred in the country. In national districts, particularly in those of Central Asia, the government pursued a chauvinistic policy, instituting, in fact, a regime of colonial oppression and subjecting the local population to cruel exploitation. As a result many peoples and nations of Russia were extremely backward, underdeveloped politically and culturally, and almost completely illiterate. They had no medical aid and were doomed to starvation, disease and gradual extinction. Russian tsarism left behind the unsavoury memory of the

Armenian-Turkish massacres, setting one nation against another and provoking conflicts between them.

One of the darkest pages in the history of tsarism is the so-called Multan trial, at which in 1892 the inhabitants of the village of Old Multan of Malmyzhsk District (Vyatka Province) were charged with making human sacrifices to their heathern gods. Despite the absence of evidence the case was framed up and exaggerated with the purpose of obtaining a severe sentence which would create a precedent for legal anti-ritual action. During the investigation of the case the villagers were beaten and tortured, and only four years later were they found innocent. But later the provocation was repeated—only there was a different, anti-Jewish version of it.

It is quite obvious that anti-Semitism in Russia was a natural consequence of the policy of the tsars on the national question in general.

Let us examine the facts.

At the end of the 18th century residential restrictions for Jews (the Jewish Pale) were introduced in Russia. What led up to this? In those days Jewish merchants often came to Moscow, Smolensk and other Russian cities and carried on wholesale and retail trade here. Trade was brisk, which annoyed the big Russian merchants. They complained to the authorities about their "rivals" and went out of their way to prove that Jews were undermining local trade by selling foreign-made goods at low prices. And they did more than that. The Russian merchants collected a large sum of money and paid it into the state treasury. Catherine II accepted the bribe and introduced a law by which Jews could henceforth live only in the Minsk, Volynsk, Podolsk, Chernigov, Kiev, Mogilyov, Poltava, Vitebsk and Grodno Provinces.

What was the notorious Jewish Pale? Massed in settle-

ments and small towns, the Jews were artificially isolated. Strangers among strangers, hated and at best only tolerated, the Jews became increasingly divorced from society in general and withdrew into their restricted ghetto community life. They were divorced from land—Tsar Alexander I forbade them to live in rural areas and become farmers. Trade and handicrafts became their main occupations. The famous Russian revolutionary and critic Lunacharsky wrote: "As the centuries went by, the bulk of the three-million Jewish population of Russia degenerated into small-chested, miserable, short-sighted weaklings tortured by foul air and malnutrition, who were only capable of becoming shoemakers, tailors and petty traders, and incapable of becoming anything else. Jews were becoming people who had to 'feed on air' and rack their brains to find some means of earning a miserable livelihood to support themselves and their families. They were becoming a people with an enormously high infant mortality rate, people who suffered beyond belief and lived in staggering, unimaginable squalor and unhealthy conditions."

It goes without saying that it was the mass of Jewish working people, who were economically and socially dependent on and oppressed by the top section of the Jewish communities—the wealthy Jews and the rabbis—that suffered mainly from this policy of the tsarist government. In order to please the Jewish bourgeoisie the law on "residential restrictions" was amended—merchants of the first guild were permitted to reside in any part of the country. Thus a wealthy Jew was no longer considered a "betrayal of Christ." On the contrary, he was regarded as a "friend" fit to sit with at table. Here the eternal laws of class solidarity were at work.

Another category of Jews, incidentally, was permitted to live outside the Pale—the prostitutes. This sometimes led

to Jewish girls being compelled to pass themselves off as prostitutes so that they could live and study in the cultural centres of Russia. If, however, the police discovered that a Jewish girl was in fact only a student, she was immediately deported to her native settlement.

Tsarism did everything to keep education from the Jews. There was a percentage restriction on Jews at all schools—only 10 per cent of Jews were admitted to secondary schools, and 3 to 5 per cent—to higher educational establishments. This privilege was enjoyed mainly by the well-to-do sections of the Jewish population.

The cherished dream of every Jewish family was to give the children an education at any cost. Sholem-Aleichem's story *Gymnasium* (Russian secondary school) tells of the fantastic lengths to which poor parents went in the attempt to get their son into a gymnasium . . . "We have travelled all over the country and have been to all the towns that have gymnasiums, the boy passed the exams everywhere, but nowhere did he get in. Why? Because of the percentage restriction!" the pupil's father complains. The craving for learning was quite logical—a higher education, besides everything else, made it possible for a young person to break through the rigid boundaries of the Jewish settlement. The "amended" law on "residential restrictions" enabled doctors, lawyers and engineers to live outside the Pale.

The tsarist government did not confine itself to official legislature in conducting its anti-Jewish policy. Hatred of Jews was spread energetically through the church and schools, in literature, with the help of "scientific" anti-Semitism, provocative tales about Jewish rituals etc. This could not fail to affect the backward sections of Russian society, especially the narrow-minded city dwellers and the petty bourgeoisie.



By blaming the Jews for all misfortunes and calamities the tsarist government quite deliberately and methodically diverted the discontent of the masses of the people into national hatred and provoked direct anti-Jewish action. In 1903 there was the Kishinev pogrom that horrified all Europe and pogroms went on until the time of the Belostok slaughter of 1906. Between October 18 and October 29, 1905, alone, pogroms occurred in 690 towns, settlements and villages. Tens of thousands were killed, or maimed during this terror.

Chief prosecutor of the "Holy Synod," Pobedonostsev worded the tsarist government's policy towards the Jews in the following manner: "We must," said he, "pursue a policy that will make one-third of the Jews embrace Christianity, will lead to the extinction of another third of the Jewish population and will compel the last third to emigrate." The last part of this programme was carried out to the letter. From 1881 to 1914 two million people emigrated from Russia—one-third of the Jewish population of the country.

All honest, progressive elements in Russia were against the tsarist policy of pogroms. The great Russian writer Leo Tolstoi who spoke out in defence of the Jews said unequivocally that the criminal authorities were to blame for the horrible things that were happening to the Jews. Many years later Ilya Ehrenburg recalled: "As a boy I witnessed a pogrom. It was carried out by the tsarist policemen and a bunch of hoodlums. But the Russian people were protecting and hiding the Jews. I remember my father bringing a letter by Tolstoi copied on a sheet of paper. Tolstoi lived next door, and I had often seen him. Father was reading aloud *I Cannot Remain Silent*. Tolstoi was indignant at the Jewish pogroms. And my mother started weeping. The Russian people were not to blame for the pogroms. The Jews knew that."

At that time, too, the great son of the Russian people Maxim Gorky wrote with wrath: "We protest against any kind of restrictions on the Jews' rights to free labour and Russian citizenship." He said: "I am astonished by the spiritual strength of the Jewish people, by their courageous idealism, their unshakable belief in the triumph of good over evil and the possibility of happiness on earth."

Everybody knows of the indignant speeches made by Lenin about the provocative Beilis trial.<sup>1</sup> In connection with this case a passionate appeal "To Russian Society" was published by the greatest writers, scientists and public figures of Russia—by those who made up the glory and pride of the Russian nation. The appeal was signed by Gorky, Korolenko, Blok, Kuprin, Leonid Andreyev, Alexei Tolstoi, Serafimovich, Sergeyev-Tsensky, Yanko Kupala, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Vera Zasulich, Nikolai Rubakin, Academicians Vernadsky, Kovalevsky, Ovsyanniko-Kulikovsky and many others. "Beware of those who are spreading lies!" their powerful voices of protest rang out. "Do not believe the sinister untruth which has many times been the cause of bloodshed, has killed some people and brought sin and shame on others." The reaction of workers and students to the provocative Beilis trial was hundreds of protest strikes. On one day in Petersburg alone 109 factories and plants were on strike. The Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* published resolutions passed by workers' meetings and for this was subjected to reprisals by the authorities.

From the very outset Russian Marxists struggled for the

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<sup>1</sup> Mendel Beilis, a Jew, an employee of a brick plant in Kiev, charged in 1913 with the murder of a boy in Kiev for ritual purposes. The trial was staged by the government and the black-hundred organizations for the purpose of instigating anti-Jewish riots. Despite the flagrant pressure put on the court by the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs Beilis was found not guilty.

abolition of national inequality. The Bolsheviks expressed their attitude to the national problem in very definite terms at the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in 1903. The programme adopted by the Congress provided for complete equality of all citizens irrespective of sex, religion, race or nationality.

Later on, in 1914, the Bolsheviks put forward in the Fourth State Duma a bill on national equality drafted by Lenin. The third point of the bill read: "All kinds of laws, temporary regulations and references in law that limit the Jews in any way in any sphere of social and state activities are repealed. Article 767 (Vol.IX) which states that 'the general laws apply to the Jews in all cases where there are no special provisions with regard to Jews is repealed.'" There followed an enumeration of the restrictions to be repealed.

Speaking on the bill that same year, 1914, Lenin pointed out: "It is obvious that the Jewish problem can be settled only conjointly with the other basic problems facing Russia. It goes without saying that we cannot expect the nationalistic Fourth Duma to repeal restrictions against the Jews and other 'aliens.' But the working class must raise its voice. And the voice of the Russian worker must ring out with particular force in protest against national oppression."

In October 1917 the Socialist Revolution took place in Russia. Its triumph was a result of the common struggle of people of different nationalities. The establishment of Soviet power in Petrograd and in Moscow was the beginning of its triumphal march through the entire country. The October Revolution was essentially international in its very spirit and in the aims it set itself. A smashing blow was delivered to age-long national oppression. No wonder that large numbers of Jewish working people who, as we have seen, had suffered double humiliation and oppression, took

part in the revolution. The book entitled *To the Memory of Fighters for the Proletarian Revolution* (published in 1928) cites the names of 2,160 heroes who gave their lives in the fight for Soviet power in the years 1918-1921. There are 213 Jews among them.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM OUTLAWED

But reaction did not surrender at once. The Civil War began. In their last-ditch fight the counter-revolutionaries resorted to the old and tried weapon—to fostering national hatred, and above all—anti-Semitism.

At the call of the Patriarch Tikhon religious crusades began all over the country, resulting in many dead and injured. The paths of the Petlura bands, the Denikinites and the Makhno thugs were trails of blood. I shall remember to my dying day the terrifying night when a Petlura band burst into my little native town. They set fire to houses, violated women and killed children.

Two dreadful figures show the extent of the White Guard terror—180,000 Jews were killed, 300,000 children were orphaned.

In 1919, when the Civil War was at its height, the Soviet Government published a decree which ran as follows: "According to information received by the Soviet of People's Commissars, counter-revolutionaries in many towns, particularly those near the frontlines, are carrying on agitation aimed at instigating pogroms which has already resulted in excesses directed against the local population. The bourgeois counter-revolution is arming itself with a weapon that has fallen from the hands of the tsarist autocratic government—the weapon it used each time it had to divert the indignation of the people from itself—telling the backward sections of the population that all their misfortunes came

from the Jews. . . The counter-revolutionaries have resumed persecution of the Jews, turning to account the hungry, exhausted state of the people and also of the intellectual backwardness of the most uneducated sections of the population and the lingering hostility towards the Jews which was instilled in the people by the tsarist government.

"In the Russian Federation, where the principle of self-determination for all nationalities has been proclaimed, there is no place for national oppression.

"Persecution of any nation in any form is impermissible and disgraceful. The Soviet of People's Commissars declares the anti-Semitic movement and pogroms a menace to the cause of the workers and peasants' revolution and calls on the working people of all the nations of socialist Russia to fight this evil."

When the draft of this document was ready Lenin added in his own hand: "The Soviet of Commissars orders all Soviets of Deputies to take drastic measures to cut short the anti-Semitic movement. Organizers and participants in pogroms and those conducting agitation for pogroms are to be outlawed." In March 1919 the head of the Soviet Government made a speech which was reproduced on a gramophone record and published in the press. "Only absolutely ignorant and downtrodden people," Lenin said, "can believe anti-Jewish lies and slander. . ." And he concluded by saying: "Shame on those who spread enmity towards the Jews, on those who sow hatred of other nations."

Under socialism there is no social basis for anti-Semitism. Relations between people have become completely different. There is no longer economic competition which, as has been pointed out, was made use of by the ruling classes to foster national discord. And the most important thing: the very nature and essence of socialism and its ideals are absolutely incompatible with chauvinism—one of

the most abominable manifestations of anti-popular, anti-democratic ideology. Therefore, in fact, there is a law in the Soviet Union penalizing any manifestation of racial discrimination, including anti-Semitism. The Penal Codes of all the Union Republics provide for severe punishment (imprisonment from six months to three years or exile from two to five years) for any attempt to sow racial or national hatred, to insult national dignity, to restrict the rights, or, on the contrary, to grant advantages to citizens because of their race or nationality. This law is strictly observed. Fortunately it is seldom applied, because such feelings as chauvinism, racialism and local nationalism are alien to the majority of the Soviet people. From childhood they are brought up in an atmosphere of internationalism and respect for other nationalities.

#### NOTES OF A TALK

In the West, especially in the United States, from time to time one hears voices speaking of "Soviet anti-Semitism."

Recently I was present at a talk between the American journalist Paul Novick and members of the staff of the USSR Prosecutor's Office.

Here are some notes taken by me during the talk.

PAUL NOVICK: "What is being done to combat anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union?"

NIKOLAI ZHOGIN, Deputy of the USSR Chief Prosecutor: "Cases of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union are extremely rare. Nevertheless we take a very stern view of crimes of this kind because they are in essence aimed at undermining the foundations of our state and social structure. This is an infringement of the law that cannot go unpunished.

"In July 1965, in a speech made in Riga, Soviet Premier

Alexei Kosygin said that 'any kind of nationalistic survivals—whether they be manifestations of nationalism, chauvinism, racism or anti-Semitism—are things absolutely alien to and incompatible with our ideology.' Such official statements, it seems to me, have direct bearing on the question raised by you."

**GENNADY TEREKHOV**, Senior Assistant of the USSR Chief Prosecutor: "The Prosecuting Office of the USSR combats any manifestation of anti-Semitism. Offenders are prosecuted. In many cases they are convicted and sent to prisons or camps. But in some cases public condemnation proves sufficient."

Paul Novick recalled a case in Buynaksk (Daghestan). Yes, about six years ago the local newspaper of this town published a bungling, politically illiterate article alleging that the Jewish religion prescribes the use of the blood of Moslems by Jews for ritual purposes. This was indeed an outrageous case. No wonder Soviet and Party bodies and broad sections of public most severely condemned the article. The editor was removed from his post.

The American journalist also recalled the "Malakhovka case."

Several years ago two malefactors set fire to the local synagogue in the town of Malakhovka, just outside Moscow. The criminals were found and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. What kind of people were they? Drunkards and hoodlums. Unfortunately there are still types like these in our country who disturb the quiet life and work of our people. A relentless fight against this evil is going on.

**PAUL NOVICK**: "Some papers still write about the high percentage of Jews convicted for economic crimes. Is that really so?"

**NIKOLAI ZHOGIN**: "Such talk is a mere fabrication. The prosecutors and courts in the Soviet Union never dis-

criminate against any one when investigating cases or bringing legal action against a person. If a Russian, an Armenian or a Jew has committed a crime he must answer for it in the same manner. Article 8 of the USSR Criminal Jurisdiction Code and Codes of the Union Republics states: 'Criminal justice is done on the basis of equality before the law and the courts of all citizens, irrespective of their social, property or administrative status, nationality, race or religion.' "

GENNADY TEREKHOV: "In the Soviet Union the absolute number of Jews convicted for so-called economic crimes is not only smaller than the number of people of other nationalities convicted for the same kind of crimes but also the proportion of convicted Jews compared to the total number of Jews in the country is smaller than the proportion of criminals of other nationalities."

For two months Paul Novick studied the life of the Jews in the Soviet Union. On returning to New York he wrote a booklet *Jews in the USSR* where, among other things, he says: "How should one actually regard the allegation of 'Soviet anti-Semitism?' Is there any moral ground for this outcry? Can one adopt such an attitude to a country where Jews have been given the richest opportunities for living and developing? I myself did not see any manifestations of anti-Semitism in the USSR or any anti-Semitic literature of which we in the USA, unfortunately, have more than enough; nor did I see any bandits with swastikas on their arms. In the USA they walk about in broad daylight."

By the way, in an article published by the magazine *Political Affairs* (September 1966) the American journalist Chaim Suller writes that in February 1966 the Chairman of the New York Council of Rabbis Israel Movshovich sent a request to the Attorney General for an investigation to be carried out in connection with the ever-growing number of



anti-Jewish outbreaks in the country. Suller mentions cases of synagogues being defiled. On January 4, 1966, a meeting was held in a Bronx public school to discuss the problem of how to protect the Jewish pupils from the constant anti-Semitic bullying and terrorizing by many racist-minded senior-graders. That same year in another part of the country—in Oakland, California—Jew-haters set fire to the house of Simon Barfem—a Jew who had come to the USA after ten years in a nazi concentration camp. The author of the article points out that anti-Jewish attacks are often carried out under nazi slogans.

He also points out that the ideologists of anti-Semitism in the USA are grouped round their own periodicals, such as the monthly *The Cross and the Flag* published by the Christian National Crusade.

"Communism," says *The Cross and the Flag* in its October issue of 1965, "was invented by a Jew; it is organized and financed by the Jews." Chaim Suller complains that there is no effective struggle against anti-Semitism in the USA. That is the main idea of his booklet *The Price of Silence*, published in New York in 1966.

And here is what Mandel Terman, a Chicago businessman who visited the Soviet Union has to say: "I have been studying the position of the Jews in the Soviet Union for a comparatively long time. I have enough material at my disposal which testifies to the fact that the Jews in the Soviet Union enjoy both de jure and de facto equality with all other nationalities and that they are not discriminated against."

A change of social conditions brings about new ideals and new relationships between people. These changes are especially noticeable in the sphere of national relations. However, this process can by no means be regarded as an easy or simple one because national prejudices are particu-

larly strong and persistent. I would be sinning against the truth if I said that they had been completely eradicated. That is why the systematic development of a spirit of internationalism in people is one of the major ideological tasks of the socialist state.

#### WHAT IS BIROBJAN?

The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia signed by Lenin soon after the proclamation of Soviet power, namely on November 16, 1917, granted genuine freedom to all peoples. The Declaration stipulated that the Soviet regime was "guided in its activities with regard to the nationalities of Russia by the following principles: 1. Equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of Russia. 2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, including secession and the formation of an independent state. 3. The repeal of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions. 4. Free development of the national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting Russia."

There are over one hundred nationalities in the Soviet Union. Almost all of them—97.6 per cent—acquired national statehood in the form of Union and Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and National Areas.

It is not my purpose to describe all these forms of state but I must say this: the Soviet regime does its utmost to provide each nationality with the fullest possible opportunities to exercise its rights and pursue its interests. Here is one fact by way of illustration. There are two Chambers in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—the supreme organ of power in this country. By a decision of the first session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the seventh convocation (July 1966) the number of standing commissions which consider basic state, economic, social and cultural problems

was increased to nine. The number of members of these commissions in both Chambers is the same. What is the basis of representation in these Chambers? The basis of representation in the Soviet of the Union is the same for all republics—one member for every 300,000 of the population. If there were only one Chamber in the Supreme Soviet then the larger republics would enjoy a factual advantage over the smaller republics. In order to avoid this the Soviet of Nationalities has an equal number of members from all Republics, irrespective of their territory or population—every Union Republic has 32 members, every Autonomous Republic 11, every Autonomous Region five, and every National Area one. No measure can become law without the approval of both Chambers of the Supreme Soviet.

All Republics and Autonomous Regions have their own state executives, their own budgets, press, radio and TV, theatres, schools and institutes. I should like to give a brief description of the Jewish Autonomous Region. It was formed on the decision of the Central Executive Committee (the old name of the present-day Supreme Soviet of the USSR) of May 7, 1934.

The Jewish Autonomous Region, or Birobidjan as it is usually called, is situated in the Soviet Far East and is part of the Khabarovsk Territory. Hemmed in by the picturesque Khingan Mountains, it stretches along the banks of the Amur, a deep river in the Far East, and its tributaries the Bira and Bidjan. It occupies an area of 35,800 sq. km.—larger than that of Belgium. The Jewish Autonomous Region consists of five administrative districts. There are two cities on its territory—Birobidjan and Obluchye, 12 urban communities including Ilingansk, Bira, Birakan, Londoko, Tyeplozersk and Smidovich, and 43 villages.

In 1934, at the time the Region was formed, all it had in the way of industry was 15 handicraft workshops, and a

dozen small factories. Now it has big enterprises producing iron and steel, machinery, cement, paper, textile, knitwear, footwear, food, and building materials. In one week the industry of the Jewish Autonomous Region turns out more goods (in monetum value) than in the whole of 1934.

The Jewish Autonomous Region daily ships to Khabarovsk Territory and other parts of the Soviet Union railway trucks, flatcars and often whole train loads of transformers, autotractor trailers, building materials, clothing, footwear, textiles, knitwear and foodstuffs.

Alongside with the development of industry the agriculture of the Region is growing too. Good harvest of wheat, potatoes and other vegetables, rice, soy and other crops are now grown on land formerly occupied by taiga.

But especially heartening is the change that has taken place in the people since the formation of the Region. Their interests and aspirations have broadened. Former handicraftsmen and petty traders from Jewish settlements have become builders, timber-workers, mechanics, machine-tool builders, tractor-drivers, farmers, engineers, doctors, factory and collective farm managers and heads of state institutions. I know a carpenter, Israel Goldmakher, who was born in the settlement of Malin in the Zhitomir Region. He was one of the first new settlers. He saw the obscure little village of Tikhonkoye become the city of Birobidjan. Goldmakher has been building both towns and a new life. In his family there are two engineers, three women teachers, a mechanic, two fitters, two doctors and two dressmakers. Five of his grandchildren are at school and three are students.

The children of the first settlers continue the work of their fathers. On August 14, 1966, Birobidjan papers published a list of employees at the local machine-tool build-

ing plant who had been decorated with orders and medals by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Awards went to turner Rafail Khersonsky, plant manager Solomon Kadiner, fitters Samuel Zhelitzkov and Isaak Kaplan, foreman Fruma Gurevich and punch-operator Rachel Gleizer.

It has already been said that in old Russia Jews were barred from cultivating land, and the people who came to the taiga did not know how to grow grain. But as they transformed the taiga they transformed themselves. Let us take the family of Ezekiel Rak. He was the very first settler to become a tractor-driver. As time went on his three sons grew up, and now four of them form a tractor-team, with father as team leader.

I also met the agronomist at the collective farm—Rachel Freidkina. She has developed a new variety of wheat which is now being grown far beyond the boundaries of the Jewish Autonomous Region, and for it has been awarded the title of Merited Agronomist of the Russian Federation.

*Birobidjan Pravda*, organ of the Regional Communist Party Committee, has published a feature article describing life and work of Vladimir Peller, agronomist and Hero of Socialist Labour. He is chairman of the biggest collective farm near Birobidjan, and a highly successful farm it is.

The Jewish Autonomous Region has many cultural and educational establishments, including over 160 schools with approximately 40,000 pupils. The young people of Birobidjan are offered a wide choice of educational opportunities in teachers' training, medical, technical and music schools, and a school training farm-machinery operators.

The Birobidjan People's Theatre company gives performances in the town itself and goes to outlying areas. Jewish actors from Moscow, Leningrad and other cities frequently go to the Region on tour.

There are two newspapers published in the Region, one in Russian, the other in Yiddish. Works by local Jewish writers—prose writers, poets and critics—appear in the Moscow magazine *Sovietish Heimland*. The Region's Sholem-Aleichem library frequently arranges Yiddish literary evenings, and there are regular broadcasts in Yiddish.

#### HOW MANY JEWS ARE THERE IN THE JEWISH AUTONOMOUS REGION?

Here I foresee a great many questions. How many Jews are there in the Region at present? What proportion are they of the whole? What is the national character of this Region?

The 1959 census figures registered the total population as 162,856—of these 14,269 were Jews (8.8 per cent); 127,281 Russians (78.2 per cent); 14,425 Ukrainians (8.9 per cent); 1,578 Byelorussians (1 per cent).

True to the principles of Lenin's policy on the national question, the Soviet state gave the Jews full opportunity to establish their own autonomous national state. In those days, i.e. over thirty-three years ago, there were still many Jews in the areas formerly designated for Jews who had neither profession nor occupation and were not essentially different from the notorious *Luftmenschen* ("men of air"). These people needed jobs very urgently. The news of the establishment of a Jewish Autonomous Region in the Far East was hailed in many Jewish settlements in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. And trainload after trainload of Jews headed for Birobidjan.

I was in Birobidjan when the first settlers arrived, their luggage consisting of old pillows and ragged blankets. Their fares were paid by the state and they were fed free on the journey. By a special decision of the Government each

family was given emergency financial assistance and a longterm loan to enable the migrants to settle down and put down roots immediately in the new area.

Year after year the Government allocated large sums of money for the building of industrial enterprises, the cultivation of taiga land and the building of new towns and settlements in the Jewish Autonomous Region. All this yielded wonderful results.

"But why are there so few Jews in the Region?" the reader may ask.

It seems to me that one of the main reasons is this: by the end of the thirties, especially in the war years, there was no longer any need for Jews with jobs to move. Why should a person living in Vinnitsa, Kiev or Sverdlovsk leave a place where he has lived for a long time, give up his permanent job and abandon his friends and acquaintances? There may have been other reasons. And of course, Soviet power is not to blame for the fact that tens of thousands and not hundreds of thousands went to Birobidjan.

## *In One Family of Nations*

### A HELPING HAND

It has already been pointed out that the Jewish question could have been solved only simultaneously with other basic problems facing the country. The October Revolution of 1917, which had swept away all national and racial privileges and proclaimed complete equality of all the nations and nationalities of multi-national Russia, gave the Jewish people a real opportunity to start an entirely new life.

The Soviet way of life has strengthened the feeling of friendship and solidarity between all nationalities of this country. In what precisely, is this feeling manifested?

It is manifested, above all, in the unselfish aid the nationalities extend to one another. Let us take a recent example.

As a result of the October Revolution all the oppressed nationalities of the former Russian Empire were given po-



litical freedom. But to make this freedom real it was necessary to change entirely their way of life—i.e. it was necessary to eliminate gradually the unevenness of the economic and cultural development of various parts of the country, to do away with the extreme backwardness which marked large areas before the revolution, establish industry and transport and bring literacy to millions of people who had no written language before and did not even know what writing was.

To solve this formidable task it was necessary, first of all, to lay the foundation for economic development in the formerly backward areas. In a comparatively short space of time the outlying parts of the country were transformed. Take, for instance, the Republic of Uzbekistan. Before the revolution cotton grown in Uzbekistan was shipped for processing to the central areas of Russia. Now this Republic has become the centre of a highly modern textile industry, Russian textile specialists having helped the Uzbeks to master the finer points of textile manufacture. Other industries are also developing successfully in this Republic.

Big industrial enterprises are built by the joint efforts of all the peoples of the Soviet Union. When, for instance, at the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties the construction of Dneproges (the hydro-electric station and dam on the Dnieper) was started in the Ukraine workers of all nationalities went there to help—Byelorussians, Kirghiz, Georgians, and Tatars. I have met many Jewish young men whose working careers had begun there, at this electric power giant of the First Soviet Five-Year Plan.

And many years later 34 different nationalities helped to build the Karaganda iron and steel works in Kazakhstan.

The proverb goes: a friend in need is a friend indeed. I could illustrate this with many examples. But here is the latest example—Tashkent. As a result of hundreds of earth

tremors in the summer of 1966 a total of 36,370 buildings were destroyed or damaged in the city, among them 35,000 houses. Altogether 70,460 families were made homeless for just the first three months.

As soon as the news of the earthquake was reported the Tashkent City Soviet started receiving letters from all the Republics. In these letters people offered homes and work to the earthquake victims. The Russian Federation, the Ukraine, the Uzbek Republic itself, Byelorussia, the Trans-Caucasian Republics, the Baltic Republics, Moldavia and Kazakhstan—in a word, all the Republics offered immediate effectual aid. In all 16,500 flats were allocated to people from Tashkent in the towns and villages of the Soviet Union.

Such is the enormous force of the most humane moral principle: "Man to man is friend, comrade and brother."

#### IN TIMES OF STRESS

I remember a more remote calamity, remote but unforgettable. I mean the dire suffering brought to my people by fascism. In all the long centuries of Jewish history, from the time of Roman rule and the terror of the Middle Ages there has been nothing more tragic than the horrors of fascism. The doctrine of "Aryan" superiority decimated many nationalities. Fifty million killed—this is the bloody record of the Second World War. The Soviet people lost 20 million of its sons and daughters. Nearly half of them were peaceful civilians and war prisoners killed and tortured to death by the Hitlerites on temporarily occupied Soviet territory.

Among the peaceful Soviet citizens put to death by the nazis were people of various nationalities. In Babi Yar—a fearful place of mass slaughter—200,000 people were ex-

terminated, 70,000 of them Jews and over 100,000 Russians and Ukrainians. Tens of thousands of fascist victims—Jews, Lithuanians, Russians and Poles are buried in the common graves of Ponariai near Vilnius. As a Soviet officer I saw many villages in the summer of 1944, after the Soviet Army had liberated Byelorussia, where the nazi bandits had wiped out the entire Byelorussian population—women, old people and children.

The Hitlerites destroyed 1,710 towns, big and small. This figure means devastated homes, destroyed mines and factories, desolate hearths, trampled gardens. It means the tears and sufferings of many orphans. For the Jewish people this was a truly national tragedy. The nazis' official racial programme aimed at the complete extermination of the Jews everywhere. And there were rivers of blood wherever the nazi bandits trod. In Warsaw and Paris, in Amsterdam and Budapest, in Minsk and Kiev, in hundreds and thousands of cities and towns the nazi butchers carried out this macabre programme with cold-blooded sadism. In Poland they killed 2,900,000 Jews, in the Soviet Union 1,720,000 and in Rumania 425,000. In all 6,351,000 Jews—one-third of the total Jewish population—were shot, tortured or gassed to death.

In those times of stress the Soviet state, which was fighting a bloody war against a brutal enemy, found the means to evacuate from the fighting areas large numbers of people of different nationalities—Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, etc. Hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia and the Baltic Republics who were threatened with imminent destruction by the nazis found refuge in Bashkiria, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Siberia and the Urals, and this ensured their survival. Approximately 300,000 Jews who had fled from Poland before

the advance of Hitler's hordes found refuge and salvation on Soviet territory, and after the war were able to rejoin their families living outside the Soviet Union.

The brutal eradication of the Jews in the occupied areas caused deep pain in the hearts of the Soviet people. Two of the Ukraine's leading poets, Pavlo Tychina and Maxim Rylsky, wrote fiery poems dedicated to the tragedy of the Jewish people. A powerful poem by Gafur Gulyam, an Uzbek poet and scientist, called *I Am a Jew* appeared in the Soviet press in 1942. Hitler's programme for the complete obliteration of the Jews heightened the Soviet people's hatred for the enemy and inspired them to energetic action. In temporarily occupied Minsk the Communist Party underground and partisan command made virtually heroic efforts to rescue as many people as possible from the ghetto and send them to partisan-held forests. As a result, ten thousands of the Minsk ghetto inmates were saved.

Many cases could be quoted of Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Latvians risking their lives to go to the rescue of doomed Jews. In Kaunas, for instance, two Russian women, Natalia Fugalevich and Natalia Yegorova organized refuge in their houses for those who managed to escape from the ghetto.

#### THE STORY OF A JEWISH BOY

The writer Genrikh Gofman, Hero of the Soviet Union, describes what happened in Taganrog in 1941. A column of Jews guarded by Tommy-guns were being taken to be executed. The streets were thronged with townspeople accompanying the mournful procession. Among these people in the street was the old fisherman Kuzma Turubarov. His attention was attracted by a young woman walking right near the pavement, a boy of four clinging to her dress. The

boy had a red fringe, a gap-toothed mouth and a nose dotted with pale freckles.

Suddenly Kuzma Ivanovich met the woman's glance, and in it was a desperate appeal.

"Zhorik, come here," he said tenderly to the boy without realizing to the full what he was doing.

The woman pushed the boy hurriedly towards Kuzma. He looked back at his mother with surprise but she only gave him a wan smile. Then he stepped on the pavement and took a step in the direction of Kuzma.

"My name is not Zhorik but Tolya," the boy said in a friendly way. "And I know you; mother and I used to come to your house to buy fish."

Kuzma looked round quickly. Nobody was paying any attention to them.

"I'm going to give you some more fish," he said to the boy as he took him by the hand and they quickly made their way through the crowd.

Looking back, he caught the woman's grateful glance as she was marched away, in the column.

"And where's mummy gone?" Tolya asked looking at Kuzma.

"She'll be back soon," the old fisherman answered averting his gaze.

"And where are we going?" the boy asked trustingly.

"We're going home, child, home," the old fisherman mumbled.

In this way Tolya became a member of the Turubarov family.

"And when will my mother return?" he would often ask the grown-ups.

"Be patient, Tolya. She'll be back soon," someone would answer sadly.

In fact his mother had been shot dead with other Jews

behind the barbed wire of the aerodrome that sunny morning. There, in a small ravine called Petrushin Gorge, one could hear the rat-a-ta of tommy-guns every day.

Anatoly Fridlyand is living in Moscow now. He graduated from the Moscow Institute of Power Engineering, became an electronics engineer and works at the Ministry of Communications. He is a father now, and his son is very like little Tolya, who in the times of stress was saved from death by the family of a Russian fisherman.

### THE RESCUERS

I should like to tell you about Yaruga, a village situated near Mogilev-Podolsk in the Ukraine. For over two hundred years Jews and Ukrainians had lived in this village next door to each other and were the best of neighbours. In 1929 they set up two separate collective farms. Both collective farms thrive.

In 1941 the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. It was decided to evacuate the Yaruga Jews to a safe place. However, when most of them had reached the town of Tulchin the nazis barred the refugees' way and made them return to the village.

One day the SS commandant called a meeting of all the Ukrainian peasants—about two hundred people. He declared it was time to do away with the Jews. The peasants said unanimously that they had known the local Jews since childhood, that their fathers and grandfathers had got on well with the Jews and that the Jews were honest hard-working people like everyone else. But their words carried no weight with the murderers.

A few days later all the Jews were driven into a ghetto. Some of them, like Itsko Kapitman, did not obey the order and ran away and hid themselves. Kapitman's family

spent all the terrible years of the occupation in the house of Ivan Taranovsky, hiding in a pit whenever danger threatened. Now these two families are linked by ties stronger than any ties of blood.

There are many such "foster relatives" in Yaruga. Moisey Dunavets and his whole family found refuge in Ivan Mrachkovsky's house. The Darkhovsky family was rescued by Mikhail Taranovsky.

The Ukrainian peasants helped Jews in the ghetto. Mrachkovsky and his family cooked from 10 to 15 dinners every day and secretly got them into the ghetto. Many others did likewise. Church warden Kuzma Bochinsky openly helped the Jews. "Do not weep, children," he appealed to them. "With God's will our troops will come back!"

It was known in Yaruga that the Germans might destroy the ghetto and wipe out its inmates at any moment and the local underground resistance committee decided to act.

Village elder Fyodor Krizhevsky handed in an application to the occupation authorities in which he pointed out that the local Jews were expert grape-growers and that without their help this important crop would be ruined, to the detriment of the Third Reich. He asked for temporary release from the ghetto of twenty-five grape-growers and their families. The trick worked. The request was repeated. In a short while the peasants managed to get everyone out of the ghetto. They were hidden in every conceivable place. In this way the whole Jewish population of Yaruga survived, except for four people killed during bombing attacks.

The rescuers were aided by the steep banks of the River Yaruga and the ravines, which prevented the SS troops from carrying out unexpected raids on the village. The Jews could always be warned about any danger. An important fact, of course, was the confidence the German authorities had in the "village elder" and the "policemen" who were

members of the anti-fascist underground group.

After the war 163 men did not return to this village—99 Ukrainians and 64 Jews.

Friendship between the Ukrainian and Jewish inhabitants of Yaruga today is as strong as ever.

#### OUR CONTRIBUTION

There are many heroic pages in the history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against fascist Germany. Each chapter of that history is a record of unprecedented feats in the name of the freedom and independence of Soviet Motherland. And I am extremely proud of the fact that my people made their glorious contribution to this magnificent history.

Hitler did not only want to exterminate us, Jews. He wanted to break our spirit and thought that we would disappear from the earth with the stamp of coward branded on each one of us. But could this have happened to a nation that had given to the world Spinoza and Heine, Mendelssohn and Börne, Feuchtwanger and Einstein, Antokolsky and Levitan?

I recall a Jewish anti-fascist meeting held in Moscow on August 24, 1941. Speaking at this meeting the eminent Soviet actor and public figure Solomon Mikhoels made the following passionate appeal: "Jewish mother! Even if you have an only son—give him your blessing to go and fight the brown plague!"

The message adopted at the meeting said: "The bloodshed calls for vengeance and not for fasting and praying. We do not want to light funeral candles—we want to light a fire that will consume the butchers of mankind. And we want action—not words. Now or never!"



I shall cite one figure. The total number of Jews who participated in the fight against the Hitler hordes on all fronts of the Second World War was no less than two million. This figure does not include the Warsaw ghetto fighters and Jews participating in partisan detachments which struck considerable blows at the Hitlerites in the rear.

Half a million Jews fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army. Their selflessness and courage in battle is borne out by the following fact: the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR awarded orders and medals for heroism and valour in battle to 160,722 Jewish Soviet officers and soldiers and the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred on 114 Jewish servicemen.

Throughout the war, side by side with Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Uzbeks and Armenians, Soviet Jews defended the honour and freedom of their country. Friendship linking the Soviet people was manifested in most complicated, often dramatic, situations. On November 21, 1942 the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* reported that in the battle of Stalingrad three Soviet soldiers, Russian Chereptsov, Ukrainian Tkachenko and Jew Shoikhet, attacked several dozen Hitlerites and made them flee after a fierce clash.

In the Second World War I fought my way with the Soviet Army from Moscow to Berlin. And I recall with pride and affection the names of my fellow Jews who were among those who fought the Hitlerites in the air, on sea and on land. The fascist invaders learned from their bitter experience the destructiveness of the torpedoes of the legendary *Maljutka* submarine, which was commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union Israel Fisanovich, of the shells of the artillery formation commanded by Guards Lieutenant-General Girsh Plaskov, of the grenades thrown by Lazar

Papernik, a Moscow watchmaker and Hero of the Soviet Union, who distinguished himself in an air-borne unit.

In Leningrad lives and works Professor Khaim Dyskin. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was conferred upon him post-humously. No, no, this is not a slip—"post-humously" is how the award was made. That was the way it was put in the edict of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

In 1941 Khaim Dyskin had just turned eighteen. He had dreamt of entering the University and instead had become a gunner in an anti-tank battery. In November bloody battles were going on along the Volokolamsk Highway near Moscow, and armoured divisions and a great mass of tanks were trying to break through to Moscow. They were hurtling toward the Soviet capital, destroying all obstacles in their way. Who could stop them? And could they really be stopped?

"Vast as Russia is, there is nowhere to retreat—Moscow is behind us!"—the words spoken by an officer of the famous Panfilov division in those days became the motto of the defenders of the Soviet capital. And here, too, on the wooded snow-covered hill near the village of Gorki where Dyskin's battery was stationed everybody realized quite clearly: "No retreat—Moscow is behind us!"

Day and night the Germans poured their fire at the commanding height that stood in their way.

There seemed to be no trace of life in the scorched pine-trees on the black snow. But the moment the enemy tanks approached the height they were forced to stop. Smoke and fire covered the steel turrets. Dazed fascists staggered out of the tanks, and few of them survived. The commanding height on the highway remained impregnable causing superstitious fear among the Hitlerites. It never even occur-

red to any of them that by November 18 only three people remained alive on the "charmed hill" at whose foot nearly twenty tanks had been smashed in the previous few days. They were Aristarkhov, a tall broad-shouldered Volga giant, Gusev, a quiet fellow from the Moscow suburbs, and Dyskin, just out of school.

Three Tommy-guns and two anti-tank guns that by some miracle had remained undestroyed were all the weapons at the disposal of the three artillery men, the three defenders of the height. Completely tired out and exhausted they fought on. As soon as the rumbling of the steel tracks became more distinct the three of them were at their stations by the guns. They were in no hurry to fire. They waited for the fascist tanks to come nearer and start climbing uphill...

During one such clash battalion Commissar Bocharov, the regiment's favourite, who had managed to get to the height in some miraculous way, appeared among the gunners. He had come to say: "Reinforcements are coming—hold on!"

The Commissar also placed himself at the guns. But he had just managed to cry out: "Here they are, hold on!" and fell wounded. And the only person alive to hear these words was Khaim Dyskin. His two friends had died the deaths of heroes. He was now the only defender of the height. He was oblivious to the fact that he was also wounded and bleeding. So long as he held on and his eyes could see and his hands could move his heart would give the command "Fire! Fire!"

If the Germans had known that they were fighting just one Soviet soldier! He sent a shell into the leading tank, and a dark red fountain of fire shot up from the turret. Encouraged, Dyskin found fresh strength, took aim and hit another tank.

But two soldiers in greyish-green trench-coats were already running uphill. Khaim pressed himself against a pine-tree, almost merging with it, and aimed his Tommy-gun at them. Two more enemies dead. . . . But a moment later he himself dropped into the snow hit by an enemy bullet. And the last thing he heard was the sound of the Russian "Hurrah!" thundering over the height. . . .

In his report battalion Commissar Bocharov wrote that he had witnessed the heroic death of Private Dyskin of the 3rd Battery.

Bocharov was almost right. The doctors at the hospital, who had seen many hundreds of wounded soldiers were horrified—seventeen serious wounds. Almost no hope of survival. But Dyskin did survive, and after recovering a little he applied for admission to a medical school, although still undergoing treatment. While in hospital he studied and took his exams. It was only a year after the edict was published that Dyskin learnt he was a Hero of the Soviet Union and that his name was entered on the list of the legendary defenders of Moscow. He learnt this when he was still bedridden. One of the hospital inmates brought him an old newspaper of which he had got hold by chance and said with surprise: "Well, that's remarkable! Everything coincides—the first name, the patronymic and the surname—Khaim Tevelevich Dyskin."

Dyskin's heart began to thump. "Maybe it's me? No, it can't be true. They'd have informed me long ago." On reading the edict he learnt that he had been presumed dead.

He wrote a letter to Moscow, and within a few days received a congratulatory telegram from Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. And then the happy day came—the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star of Hero were presented to the bedridden ex-soldier.

## HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE SOVIET ARMY

In December 1965 I visited Israel. One Saturday morning a car drove into the yard of the hotel where I had put up. Out of the car came a woman with bobbed hair, a beautiful pale face and large blue eyes. Limping a little and leaning on her husband's arm (she had recently had a serious operation) the woman took several steps in my direction and then, beginning to cry, she threw her arms round my neck. This was Sonya Varzager.

Sonya was thirteen when the Hitlerites tore her away from her parents. On May 8, 1945, a Soviet Army division pursuing the remnants of Hitler's army in the Sudets liberated a concentration camp in which the SS men had collected Jewish girls from all parts of Europe. Eighteen-year-old Sonya was among those released.

Twenty years passed. But the former concentration camp inmate still remembers that happy morning in May. On learning of my arrival in Israel she and her husband had come to ask me to pay a visit to their house. Sonya's husband, Alexander Varzager was also born in Poland. In 1939, when the fascists invaded his homeland and began exterminating the Jews, the old baker Varzager and his seven sons found refuge in the Soviet Union. Later on the Varzagers left for Israel.

Their warmth and kindness towards me, a former Soviet officer, was an expression of gratitude, a tribute to the Soviet Union.

When we arrived, their house was full of guests. All day long we enjoyed ourselves and sang Soviet songs. They virtually showered on me questions about life in the Soviet Union.

As they saw me off the Varzagers said they would always have the warmest feelings in their hearts for the

Soviet Union—the country that had saved millions of people from certain death.

In Israel I met many people who spoke with profound gratitude about their rescuers, the Soviet troops. When I was on an excursion on Mount Zion an old grey-bearded Jew said to me: “Had it not been for the Russians we Jews would have been dead long ago.” A few years before that, in Moscow, the famous American playwright Arthur Miller said almost the same: “If it had not been for the Soviet Army there would have been no Jews on earth at all.”

## *People and Destinies*

### A BIT OF GEOGRAPHY

The 1959 census showed that there were 2,268,000 Jews in the Soviet Union. Two years later, i.e. in 1961 according to data of the Institute of Ethnography, the USSR Academy of Sciences, the Jewish population totalled 2,468,000. So, there must be some 3,000,000 Jews in the USSR in 1966.

When in October 1917 the Jewish Pale was abolished the question arose: How will the Jewish population live in the future? The Communist Party and the Soviet Government adopted a number of special decisions on assisting the Jews. One of these provided for reserved quotas of vacancies at industrial enterprises for Jewish young people. Nominated and sent by the Komsomol organizations thousands upon thousands of young Jews joined the ranks of the working class. At the same time streams of

young Jews poured into higher educational establishments and into specialized secondary schools. In Kharkov, Odessa and other cities specialized technical schools and courses for the Jewish youth were opened at which tuition was in Yiddish.

And this was done in the very first years of Soviet power when the country was just beginning to rehabilitate its war-ravaged economy, when unemployment was a serious problem of state importance.

But there still remained in the towns and settlements large numbers of poor Jews for whom jobs had to be provided. The question was where? On what economic basis? Suppose they went into farming? Of course there were sceptics. For more than two thousand years the Jews had been divorced from the land—would they cope with the task? I remember as if it were yesterday how much the subject was discussed in the Jewish settlements. People talked themselves hoarse arguing the matter, meetings went on day and night, commissions were elected, delegates were sent to the central Soviet administrative and state bodies. . .

But the idea was also being considered "at the highest level." This idea of the Jews taking up agriculture was actively supported by Mikhail Kalinin, who was then President of the USSR. A special committee was set up to give guidance and assistance to Jews who were going back to the land (the so-called KOMZET—which stands for "Land Committee for Jewish Working People"). Besides, a mass voluntary organization was formed to assist Jews who wanted to go in for farming (the so-called OZET—which stands for "Land Organization for Jewish Working People").

The state earmarked for this purpose large areas of land in the southern Ukraine and the Crimea. Tens of thousands of Jewish families began to migrate to the new areas. The



experiment worked—Jews who had been town-dwellers only a short while before took to the land. They sowed and harvested grain, planted orchards and vineyards and bred cattle—in short, they became real farmers. And they did these things that were new to them with the zest, energy and resourcefulness so characteristic of them.

A few years later, at the end of the twenties, three Jewish national districts were established in the Kherson and Dnepropetrovsk Regions and two in the Crimea. In one of them, the Kalinindorf District, I was appointed editor-in-chief of the local Yiddish newspaper. Of course, I often visited the other Jewish districts, too. At the time the Second World War began all of them had well-established and well-run economies. The invasion of the Hitlerites wiped out the work of many years carried out by the Jewish farmers. The collective farms in all the five districts had been ransacked and destroyed and any people who had not evacuated were massacred.

Many Jews from the Ukraine, Lithuania, Byelorussia, Moldavia, etc., evacuated during the war to the rear, gradually adjusted themselves to the new places.

Today, for instance, there are one hundred thousand Jews in Uzbekistan where hundreds of thousands of them found refuge during the war.

The bulk of the Jews who came back from evacuation and the fronts settled mainly in big towns.

How are they distributed throughout the country?

At the time of the 1959 census there were 240,000 Jews living in Moscow (4.5 per cent of the total population of the city); 168,000 in Leningrad (5.1 per cent); 154,000 in Kiev (13.9 per cent); 39,000 in Minsk (7.6 per cent); 17,000 in Vilnius (7.0 per cent); 43,000 in Kishinev (19.9 per cent); 31,000 in Riga (5.0 per cent); 17,400 in Tbilisi (2.5 per cent). The number of Jews in the Dnepropetrovsk Region

is 72,430 (3.8 per cent); in the Kharkov Region 84,000 (5.3 per cent); in the Vinnitsa Region 42,000 (11.6 per cent); in the Lvov Region 30,000 (3.6 per cent); in the Chernovtsy Region 40,000 (20.1 per cent); in the Odessa Region 120,000 (12.4 per cent); in the Gomel Region 43,000 (11.0 per cent); in the Mogilev Region 28,000 (7.6 per cent).

New construction work in Siberia and the Urals has attracted many Soviet people, including Jews. There are 40,000 Jews in three Siberian regions—Novosibirsk, Omsk and Irkutsk, and about 30,000 in the Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk Regions in the Urals.

Here it would seem appropriate to point out the following. In his book *Jews in the USSR* published in Milan in 1966, Emmanuel Litvinov, manager of the London magazine *Jewish Eastern Europe*, tries to impose upon his readers the idea that in the Soviet Union Jews are deprived of the possibility of rejoining their families and relatives living abroad. This is sheer nonsense. I have already mentioned the fact that after the war hundreds of thousands of Jews who had lived in Poland before the war left the Soviet Union. In recent years many Soviet citizens, including Jewish citizens, have left the Soviet Union for other countries to rejoin their families. In 1965, when I was going to Israel, my travelling companions were a barber from the town of Kalinin, a Sverdlovsk pensioner with his family, a Moscow housewife, a Leningrad doctor and a peasant woman from the town of Bukhara. Some were going on visits, and some were going to stay in Israel for good.

The idea that no one in the Soviet Union is preventing the reuniting of any families was expressed quite clearly by Alexei Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR at a meeting with French journalists in Paris in 1966. He said: "As for reuniting families—if the mem-

bers of some families want to rejoin one another, or if some families want to leave the Soviet Union they are welcome to do so and there is no problem here."

#### FATHERS AND SONS

Now that you know where the Jews live in the Soviet Union it is the right time to ask: How do they live?

Once in Lvov I fell into conversation with eighty-year-old Avraam Kogan.

"It is easy for people of my generation," he said to me, "to compare the past with the present. My father had two professions: he was a tailor and a fiddler. But we did not always have enough bread at home. We were five brothers—and none of us dared dream of an education. As a boy of twelve I began to work as a smith's assistant. I earned a miserable pittance.

"They say that people must forge their own happiness. That's not always true. It was difficult for a Jewish smith to forge his own happiness. We realized that only the revolution would bring us new life. And we did not spare ourselves in the fight for the revolution.

" 'We have been naught, we shall be all,' were the words of the 'Internationale' which we sang at our workers' meetings. And the dream came true. Soviet power brought us new life, full of the richest opportunities. I had three sons. Two of them were killed in the war. This is a wound in my heart that will never heal. My consolation and comfort is my youngest son. I'm proud of him. Soviet power has helped him become something worthwhile. He studied at the Polytechnical Institute, and now works at a big plant. All my life I made ploughs and carts. But my son is a designer. He designs clever machines."

And here is a description of another meeting—a meeting in Bobruisk (Byelorussia). In this town cabinet-making is almost the traditional trade. During the lunch break at the furniture factory I met the worker Moisey Khodish—a man of about sixty, with a deeply lined face.

He told me he had learned his trade from his father, who in his time had learned it from his grandfather.

“And your sons? Are they cabinet-makers, too?” I asked.

“My sons started their working careers here, at this factory. This is the bench where my eldest son, Solomon, worked. He was one of the best young cabinet-makers at the factory. Everybody praised him and that was very pleasant.”

“Why did you say ‘was’?”

“You see, my Solomon worked and studied at the same time. He became an engineer. There was a nice job ready for him here at this factory. He could have worked and enjoyed life in his native town. But children nowadays, I must tell you. . . . He had a longing to go to Siberia. He works at a big factory there and is very happy.”

“What about your younger son?”

“No luck with him. I thought he’d make a good cabinet-maker. He has hands of gold. But the trouble was his health.”

“Is he sick?”

“God forbid, no. It’s just he’s mad on sport. A wrestler. Has taken part in many contest. He’s a Master of Sports. One of the walls in my house is plastered with his diplomas. Of course, that leaves him no time for cabinet-making. He’s now giving instruction to others.”

“So you’re not very pleased about it, are you?”

“Why should I be displeased? If the son of a Bobruisk

Jew from a line of cabinet-makers becomes a Master of Sports that's not so bad, is it?"

There's nothing unusual in these cases. And there are thousands upon thousands of Soviet Jews with similar stories. I cannot help recalling Ilya Gherman, who comes from my part of the country. He always walked about the settlement bent under the weight of his glazier's box and he constantly prayed to God that the windows in the houses of the rich might break as often as possible. His son—Max Gherman—is not a glazier but an engineer. He is in charge of the electrical department of a huge industrial complex—the Nizhne-Tagil metallurgical works. Max's children also grew up there, in the Urals. They are not glaziers either. His eldest son, Boris, is foreman at a blast furnace, and his youngest, Ilya, is a roller—foreman at a huge blooming mill. His daughter, Maya, works as lathe operator and studies at an evening medical college.

The life of General David Dragunsky, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, has also been very interesting. His father was from a tailoring family in the Jewish settlement of Svyatsk in the Bryansk Province. His sons and daughters learned their father's trade in childhood. The youngest, David, was lucky. When he was seven the October Revolution took place, and he went to school. Then he worked in Moscow on the construction of the metro and erecting houses. He began his service in the army as a private.

From the very midst of the people, from among those who had said farewell to the isolation and restriction of the Jewish way of life in the small towns when the revolution began, came Hero of the Great Patriotic War Cavalry Corps Commander Major-General Lev Dovator, Chief of the Soviet Army Military Engineers' Academy Colonel-General Alexander Tsirlin, Lieutenant-Generals Matvei Vainraub,

Shimon Krivoshein and Girsh Plaskov, Army-General Yakov Kreizer and Hero of the Soviet Union Major-General Zinovy Kontsevoi.

Whether a person makes a success of his career, whether he occupies a respected position in Soviet society depend upon his education, hard work, and honesty.

When an Australian visitor asked me if I could mention the names of the Jews holding high posts in the Soviet State, I started counting them on my fingers, but, of course, I did not have enough fingers to count them all. Veniamin Dymshitz, an engineer, is Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR; Semvon Ginzburg, an engineer, is Chairman of the Board of the Construction Bank of the USSR; Lev Volodarskv, D.Sc. (Econ.), holds the post of Deputy Chairman of the Central Statistics Board of the USSR, Yuly Bokserman is Deputy Minister of the Gas Industry of the USSR; Iosif Ravich is Deputy Minister of Communications of the USSR; Leonid Glikman is Deputy Minister of the Chemical and Oil Engineering Industry of the USSR; Abram Levinsky is Deputy Minister of Electrical Engineering Industry of the USSR; Lev Maizenberg is Deputy Chairman of the State Prices Committee of the State Planning Board of the USSR; Aron Gindin is chief engineer of the Bratsk Hydro-Electric Station Administrative Committee, Alexander Birman, D.Sc. (Econ.), is Vice-Rector of the Plekhanov Institute of National Economy, the biggest training institute for economists in the USSR; Aron Kogan is Deputy Chief Prosecutor of the Russian Federation; Isaac Kaganovich is Prosecutor of the Investigation Department of the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the USSR; Lev Mendelevich is Chief of the Latin America Countries Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR etc., etc.

There are 7,647 Jews among the deputies to the Supreme

Soviet of the USSR and Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics and the Local Soviets. Among the deputies elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on June 12, 1966, were the following: Veniamin Dymshitz, Ilya Ehrenburg, Rafail Khersonsky, turner at the Birobidjan *Dalselmash* Works, Academician Yuly Khariton and designer Joseph Kotin, all of them Jewish.

In voting for a candidate the voter does not worry about his nationality—this is of no importance whatsoever. In March 1966 in the town of Kamenka-Bugskaya (Lvov Region) engineer Leiser Strier was elected deputy of the City Soviet. His electorate consisted of 4,285 Ukrainians, 1,532 Russians, 388 Poles, 76 Byelorussians and 30 Jews. Jews vote for Russians, Ukrainians vote for Byelorussians, Russians vote for Uzbeks or Georgians, Georgians vote for Armenians or Tatars etc.

#### LET FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

In his book *Jews in the USSR* (Moscow, 1939) Soviet economist I. Zinger showed that in 1914 the composition of the Jewish population of tsarist Russia was as follows:

	Percentage:
Workers in big enterprises . . . . .	4.0
Workers in cottage industries . . . . .	11.0
Handicraftsmen . . . . .	18.4
Peasants . . . . .	2.2
Office workers . . . . .	10.0
Traders, small shopkeepers, dealers and persons with no definite occupation . . . . .	54.4
Total:	100.0

And here is another table:

Social groups of Jewish population	Before the revolution	1929-30
		Percentage of total population
Industrial workers	4.0	16.3
Workers in cottage industries	11.0	4.9
Peasants	2.2	11.1
Handicraftsmen	18.4	25.1
Office workers	10.0	27.8
Traders	54.4	14.8
Unemployed		
Others		
Total:	100.0	100.0

I do not think these tables call for detailed comment. The figures show that even in the early years after the October Revolution a radical alteration took place in the social composition of the Jewish population. As the country developed, Jews took up trades that were unthinkable in the past. Yet there are people who try to smear everything we take pride in. From an article by Professor Aldo Garoshi in the previously mentioned booklet *Jews in the USSR* one might think that most of us Soviet Jews are book-keepers. And another contributory to this booklet, Alec Nove tries to prove by juggling with the figures that in the USSR "the number of Jews engaged in scientific research is steadily decreasing."

Let us examine the actual state of affairs. In 1958 there were 28,966 Jews engaged in research, and by 1965 the number had increased to 53,067. In the same seven years the number of Ukrainians engaged in research work in-



creased from 27,803 to 70,797. And it should be borne in mind that there are 20 times as many Ukrainians as Jews in the Soviet Union. I shall give a few more figures which, to my mind, are indicative: 57 Jews are members and corresponding members of the USSR Academy of Sciences and 20 are members and corresponding members of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences. The names of the following eminent men of science who happen to be Jewish are famous all over the country: Lev Landau, Semyon Volfkovich, Isaac Mints, Bentsion Vul, Israel Gelfond, Alexander Grinberg, Iosif Kassirsky, Alexander Frumkin, Yuly Khariton. The list might be continued.

On June 16, 1966, the Soviet official newspaper *Izvestia* published a list of candidates to fill vacancies in the USSR Academy of Sciences—41 members and 53 corresponding members were to be elected. There were scientists of various nationalities among the nominees, including Jews. Among those nominated for the department of general and applied physics were: Boris Vainshtein, Bentsion Vul, Vitaly Ginzburg, Georgy Grinberg, Ilya Lifshits, Yakov Dorfman, Semyon Altshuler, Lev Altshuler, Lev Vainshtein, Leib Dorman, Alexander Zeldovich, Yuri Kagan, Mikhail Levin, Evgeni Lifshits, Georgy Rosenberg, Solomon Rivkin, Veniamin Tsukerman, and Iosif Shklovsky. Those nominated for the department of nuclear physics included Yuri Zysin, Boris Yoffe, David Kaminker, Lev Lapidus, Lev Okun, Matvei Rabinovich, Yakov Smorodinsky, Evgeni Feinberg, Yefim Fradkin, Fyodor Shapiro and Iosif Shapiro. In a word, the proportion of Jews on the list of candidates was anything but small. Not all the candidates could be elected, of course. The following professors were among those who became members of the Academy of Sciences: Lev Vainshtein, Evgeni Lifshits, Lev Okun, Evgeni Feinberg, Mikhail Volkenshtein, Theodore Oizerman,

Vitaly Ginzburg, Nikolai Yerusalimsky, Victor Khain, Nikolai Emanuel and Arkady Migdal.

A few words about another section of the population. The number of Jewish specialists with a higher and specialized secondary education employed in the national economy of the Soviet Union in 1960 was 427,100; in 1962 the figure was 457,400 and in 1964 it had risen to 482,400.

These figures mean that 14 per cent of the total Jewish population of the country have a higher or specialized secondary education. One more figure by way of comparison. The average number of specialists with higher or specialized secondary education in the country is 4.9 per cent of the total population.

Alec Nove alleges that there is a percentage restriction on Jews ("numerus clausus") in Soviet higher educational establishments. We are sorry to have to disappoint Mr. Nove once more: the number of Jewish students in the 1962-63 academic year was 79,300; and in the 1965-66 academic year, 94,600. Is that a small or a large number? Let us have a look at a table based on official statistics.

**Number of Students at Higher Educational  
Establishments per 10,000 of population in 1965-66**

USSR	166
Russian Federation	186
Ukraine	152
Byelorussia	120
Uzbekistan	151
Georgia	168

The reader will see that the proportion is very high. And the proportion of students per 10,000 of the Jewish population is 315.

Does that look like a "percentage" restriction ("numerus clausus")? It seems to me that Mr. Nove himself does not believe his own figures. He concludes the article by admitting: "As a rule these figures do not show discrimination." One cannot help agreeing with that. It is of interest that the following fact is cited in the book as something bad. "In the thirties," the author writes, "the proportion of Jewish pupils and students was larger than at present." This approach is obviously onesided. One has to be extremely biased not to be pleased at such a happy fact as the tremendous growth of the cultures of all nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union, including those that were backward and downtrodden in the past. Any one who takes a look at the Soviet statistical yearbook will see how the ratio of rural to urban population has changed, how many new industrial centres have sprung up in the remotest parts of the country and how different the modern Soviet countryside is becoming as far as culture and education are concerned. All this naturally means that increasing numbers of representatives of new sections of the population become students. Anything wrong with that? But the main thing is this: nationality does not in the least affect admission to any educational establishment. This fact is corroborated, in particular, by the above-quoted figures concerning the number of Jewish students in higher educational establishments—315 students per ten thousand of the Jewish population.

On seeing this figure some readers may arrive at the reverse conclusion—so there are privileges for Jews in the Soviet Union?

No, in the Soviet Union no one has any privileges or advantages. The reason lies elsewhere. The bulk of the Jewish population are city and town dwellers. The latest census showed that 96 per cent of the Jewish population

live in cities and towns. And, as is known, the urban part of the population supplies the bulk of specialists.

This does not mean, however, that there are no Jewish workers in the Soviet Union. Quite the contrary. One can meet them at many enterprises and construction projects up and down the country—in the Urals, the Donbas, Khar'kov, Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Vilnius etc.

Jewish writers, poets and art workers have been making major contributions to the development of Soviet culture. The work of the following writers has won general recognition among Soviet people: Samuel Marshak, Ilya Ehrenburg, Pavel Antakolsky, Vera Inber, Emmanuel Kazakevich, Vassily Grossman, Mikhail Svetlov and many, many others. The violinists David Oistrakh and Leonid Kogan, ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, film directors Mikhail Romm, Mark Donskoi, Grigory Roshal, Sergei Yutkevich, Roman Karmen, the actors Mark Reizen, Leonid Utyosov and Arkady Raikin, conductor Natan Rakhlin, composers Moisei Vainberg and Arkady Ostrovsky are well-known and admired both in their homeland and outside it.

#### MERITED ESTEEM

Persons who have done great services to the country or society are awarded special honorary titles in the Soviet Union, e.g. titles like Honoured Scientist, Honoured Agromist, Honoured Doctor, Honoured Teacher, People's Artist etc. The highest award is the title of Hero of Socialist Labour and the Order of Lenin and the Gold Medal.

In 1966 a large group of office employees and workers at the country's biggest car-producing enterprise—the Moscow Likhachyov Works—were awarded orders and medals for achievements in their work for the fulfilment of the Seven-Year Plan for the Economic Development of the

USSR. Awards went to many Jews—adjuster David Belenky, team leader Isaac Guterman, laboratory chief Avraam Vozlinsky, senior foreman Valentine Rosenberg, laboratory chief Moisei Nayerman, assistant chief designer Evgeni Levinson, department chief Yuri Segalovich, senior engineer Mikhail Kantorovich, engineer Raisa Lyepskaya, works' department chief Moisei Rabin, senior foreman Aba Rekhtman, the works' chief welder Moisei Fishkis, senior foreman Vladimir Kantor, fitter Mikhail Zinoviev, fitter Israel Shekhter, technical service department chief Yesim Seletsky, senior foreman Boris Felikson, foreman Vladimir Kats, department chief Veniamin Raskind and many others.

The title of Hero of Socialist Labour has been conferred upon 55 Jews, 4 have received the title twice and 3 have become thrice Hero of Socialist Labour. Out of 844 persons who have won Lenin Prizes, 564 are Russians, 96, Jews and 184, representatives of other nationalities.

## *When Nations Come Closer Together*

### ASSIMILATION

During my stay in Israel I was invited to the editorial offices of the newspaper *Al Hamishmar* (organ of the left-wing United Workers' Party). While asking questions about life in the Soviet Union the journalists and members of the editorial board expressed what I would call a strange concern at the natural process of assimilation of Jews which is going on in my country.

It must be noted that the process of assimilation does not affect only the Jews. Here are some illustrations. In Uzbekistan there are several hundred thousand Tajiks. They speak both Tajik and Uzbek. It is indicative that a considerable number of Uzbekistan's intellectuals are from the Tajik population. Every year a certain part of the Tajik population is assimilated.

It is also well-known that in the USSR it is not only

the Jews who are assimilating rather rapidly, but also Armenians and Tatars (primarily the intellectuals), especially those who live outside their national Republics.

In the Soviet Union the process of assimilation is going on in conditions of friendship of peoples and national equality.

Under tsarism, when the Jews were crowded like sardines into the Pale and told to "breed and multiply" they were compelled to lead a miserable existence within the boundaries of a strictly limited area. This suited the policy of the tsarist government, which was to keep the enslaved nationalities separate.

Things are altogether different now. In the preceding chapter figures were cited to show that now the Jews live in all the fifteen Soviet Republics. This is not merely a result of the abolition of "residential restrictions." There is a constant, ever-growing shift of all the nationalities of the USSR. Thus, only 80 per cent of the Russian population live in the Russian Federation. The Russians live and work in the Ukraine, in Kazakhstan, in Uzbekistan and in many other Republics. They account for a large part of the population of all the Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and National Areas of the Russian Federation.

Out of the total Ukrainian population of the Soviet Union only about 86 per cent live in the Ukraine. Considerable numbers of Ukrainians live and work in the Russian Federation, in Kazakhstan and Moldavia.

One-fourth of the Tajik population live in Uzbekistan and in other Central Asian Republics. Only 56 per cent of the Armenian population live in Armenia—the rest of them live mainly in the neighbouring Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan and in some regions of the Russian Federation.

This is no exception. Only 27% of Soviet Tatars live in the Tatar Autonomous Republic, and the remainder in

other parts of the country. The same can be said of the Mordovian Autonomous Republic—only 28% of the total Mordovian population of the Soviet Union reside in the Republic.

Such population shifts help bring the nations closer together, help establish common traditions and many common features as regards morals, manners and mode of life. A close look at life in the Soviet Union will show that as time goes on the features of the new historical community of peoples become more and more distinct.

Evidence that the nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union are growing closer together is seen in the multinational composition of the staffs of workers and office employees at enterprises and the student bodies of all kinds of educational establishments; it is seen in the co-education of children of various nationalities in pre-school and school institutions. The large number of mixed marriages is convincing evidence of this and of overcoming of national barriers and prejudices.

I cannot use official statistic data—there is none, and it is hardly necessary. However, I will quote a few figures. I looked at the marriage register in the Sverdlovsk District in Moscow (there are 15 administrative districts in the city). In the period from July 15 to October 31, 1966, 50 couples got married in which one or both partners were Jewish. In all 17 out of these were "non-mixed" marriages and 33 were "mixed."

There are mixed marriages even among the Bukhara Jews whose national traditions are still very strong. Head of the Bukhara Jewish religious community Ezekiel Yadgarov said: "I don't know of any Bukhara Jewish girl marrying a non-Jew. But our men are not so zealous in observing the tradition. Many of them have married Russian, Uzbek, or Armenian girls." Naturally, one should not rush to



conclusions on the basis of such fragmentary data. Maybe the proportion is quite different in other places. But one way or another—mixed marriages are an undeniable fact.

I really do not think the process of the merging of nations to be either a smooth or rapid one. On October 7, 1966, the newspaper *Pravda* wrote: "Holding the view that the merging of nations is a natural process, the Communist Party does not in any way seek to accelerate or force this process. Leninism refers the merging of nations to the period when communism will become victorious the world over. *The way to the future merging of nations lies through a long period of development of the nations, their cultures and languages.*" The Communist Party proceeds from the principle that in the sphere of national relations haste, subjective approach or arbitrariness are absolutely impermissible. Referring to a correct policy on the national question Lenin wrote in 1921: "This is without exaggeration a question of world significance." And further: "One cannot be too strict or too serious in this matter. And one should be careful a thousand times over."

Hence the respect with which the national feelings and traditions of all the peoples and nationalities are treated in my country. Soviet reality does not lead to the extinction of national feelings but to the growth and strengthening of these feelings as well as the feeling of internationalism in the minds of the people. The first is inseparably linked up with the other. The national feelings of our people are not opposed to but reflect internationalism of Soviet people.

It seems to me this would be the proper place to mention a certain delusion. Western propaganda insistently spreads the view that the Jews in the Soviet Union are strongly attracted by Zionism. I am an elderly person and have known for a long time that in my country not only young but even old Jews have nothing to do with Zionist

ideology, which is alien to their views, their way of thinking, their psychology, and their way of life. Exceptions are possible, of course. But they are not typical of the Soviet Jews, who hate national narrow-mindedness and isolation. They know very well that the way to a new life lies through strengthening friendship between nations.

#### ON THE YIDDISH LANGUAGE

The census showed that over ten million non-Russians consider Russian to be their native tongue. These ten million include the majority of the Jewish population. In fact, the Jews in the USSR have long used not one but several languages. In the Russian Federation they speak Russian, in the Ukraine—Russian and Ukrainian, in Georgia—Georgian etc. In 1926 more than seven tenths of the Jewish population considered Jewish (Yiddish) to be their native tongue, and in 1959 the proportion had dropped to one-fourth.

By the way, this is not anything peculiar to the Soviet Union. For instance, in the United States the number of Jews who speak their native tongue is decreasing from year to year. I remember a remark made by the well-known American Jewish poet Yakov Glatshstein in the New York magazine *Yiddisher Kemfer* after a Washington conference on Soviet Jewish affairs to the effect that at this conference "every one shouted in English that we must have the Yiddish language—in Russia." Barely twenty per cent of the Jewish population of the United States consider Yiddish to be their native tongue. The percentage is still smaller in France and is particularly small in Great Britain.

The question is sometimes asked, however, why there are no Jewish schools in the Soviet Union.

Right after the revolution the Soviet state set up a

broad network of Jewish schools because in those days the children of poor Jewish families knew, as a rule, only one language—Yiddish. The aim was, through Jewish schools to make the younger generation familiar with the cultures of other nationalities, draw them into the new life of the country and enable them to take an active part in the building of this new life. It was the Jewish school that enabled many thousands of Jewish young people to go to factories, mines and construction sites, universities and laboratories and big towns.

Life changed. The generation of Jews who had come to big towns from small Jewish settlements gradually mingled with the mass of the people of various nationalities. Naturally their children were brought up in a different environment. As time went on, gradually and imperceptibly, though inevitably, Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, etc., became the native tongue in these families. In such conditions it was only natural that fewer and fewer children went to Jewish schools. In view of the new conditions, different from those in which they themselves had grown up, parents preferred to send their children to Russian schools.

At the end of the thirties there was just a handful of Jewish schools. But over a quarter of a century has passed since then. Can we say that now, in the sixties, there is a real objective need for Jewish schools in any part of the country? I think not. By this I do not mean, of course, that there are no people in the Soviet Union who want to learn Yiddish. There are such people, no doubt. There are not many of them, but they do exist. In my opinion, for these people the acceptable form of learning might be provided by special courses, seminars or study by correspondence.

Yiddish has become the language of a small group of people. Suffice it to say that in the Soviet Union the bulk

of the readers of literature in Yiddish are people of the older generation. But Yiddish is undoubtedly alive. I am convinced that the language of Mendele, Sholem-Aleichem and Perets will live a long time hence.

The Yiddish language was very well described by the well known Russian poet and translator Lev Ozerov. "Literary Yiddish conveys the very deep popular humour of Sholem-Aleichem, philosophical lyrics of Samuel Gal-kin—woven from the fibres of the heart, the tender, clever prose of Noah Lurye and the beautifully finished verse of David Gofshtein. People have been deeply moved by the writings of Perets Markish and the crystal-clear lyrics of Lev Kvitko, so close to the people and child-like in its innocence. We have heard Shakespeare rendered by Solomon Mikhoeles and the Yiddish language conveyed easily and fully all the shades of the emotions and torments of King Lear, who the following night would become Teyve the Milkman. . ."

The Yiddish language can be heard in Deribasovskaya Street in Odessa, on Kreshchatik in Kiev, in the streets of Vilnius and Chernovtsy, in Moscow concert halls, over the radio and TV. Jewish writers and poets write wonderful poems, stories, novels and essays in modern Yiddish—a rich language of the people. But of that—in the next chapter.

## *Literature and Art*

### "SOVIETISH HEIMLAND." BOOKS

The inner life of Soviet man is very rich. The vain attempts of certain American journalists, such as B. Goldberg, who keep harping on "limitations on the spiritual life" of the Soviet Jews, consequently look ridiculous. The Soviet Jew values and appreciates Tolstoi, Gorky, Yesenin and Blok to the same degree as the Russian values and appreciates Sholem-Aleichem and Mendele, Mikhoels and Markish. Such people are by no means "spiritually limited." Today neither the older generation nor the younger generation of Soviet Jews can imagine their life without Russian books, the Russian theatre, music and painting. All this has become part and parcel of their spiritual life.

At the same time Jewish culture is also flourishing and developing.

Let us begin with literature. First of all, there is the

magazine *Sovietish Heimland* ("Soviet Homeland") published in Moscow. At first it was a bimonthly, but very soon, at the request of its readers, it was enlarged in size (from 128 to 160 pages) and transformed into a monthly. The magazine is sold in all the Soviet Republics and there is no limitation to the number of copies published. Subscriptions are taken in the United States, Israel, France, Poland, and in the Latin American countries. It has won recognition not only in the USSR but far outside the country.

In the years of its publication the magazine has introduced readers to the works of over one hundred Jewish writers living in various parts of the country—Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, Vilnius, Riga, Birobidjan, Odessa, Kharkov, Chernovtsy, Kazan etc., etc.

In the magazine's office I saw heaps of letters from all parts of the Soviet Union. This is what one reader, Leib Kheifets, who lives in Yalta, said: "There are two things I await eagerly each month—my copies of the Crimean symphony orchestra programme in Yalta and *Sovietish Heimland*."

Dozens of novels and stories have been printed by *Sovietish Heimland*. But, of course, it is not quantity that counts. The important thing is that Soviet Jewish prose presents to the reader a vast canvas of historical events from the end of the last century to this day. Time has proved that the creation of highly artistic works is well within the scope of Jewish writers.

Readers of the magazine highly appreciate the novels, tales and stories by ninety-year-old veteran Jewish writer David Vendrov, the works of Elli Shekhtman, Natan Lurye, Iosif Rabin, Itsik Kapnis, Samuel Gordon, Grigory Polyaner, Ezekiel Falikman, Ezekiel Shraibman, Natan Zabara, Moisei Altman, Boris Miller, Riva Rubin, Grigory Dobin,

Mikhail Lev, Khaim Melamud and many others. *Sovietish Heimland* has published interesting poems by the following gifted poets: Girsh Osherovich, Moisei Teif, Yakov Shternberg, Aron Vergelis, Shloime Roitman and Zinoviy Telesin. The names of these poets are very well known to the readers—Rakhil Baumvol, Isaak Borukhovich, Khanan Vainerman, Avraam Gontar, Matvei Grubian, Yevsey Driz, Khaim Maltunsky, Matvei Saksier, Riva Balyasnaya, Dora Khaikina, Matvei Talalayevsky, Meyer Kharats, Iosif Lerner, Mendel Lifshits, Shifra Kholodenko, David Bromberg etc., etc.

Among the poetical works published by the *Sovietish Heimland* in 1966 the *Song of Songs* rendered in Yiddish in verse for the first time by Moisei Teif merits particular note.

Feature articles have won a firm position in the magazine. Documentary articles containing on-the-spot reports tell the reader about the Soviet homeland. Among other things, this material gives the reader an idea of where and how the Jews live in the USSR, what they are doing, of how their general outlook, psychology, way of life and morals, interests and aspirations have changed under Soviet power.

*Sovietish Heimland* also publishes dramatic works that are of interest to Jewish theatrical art. For example, the play *The Khelem Sages* by Moisei Gershenzon, which was first published in the magazine, is now on not only at Soviet theatres but has also been staged in the United States, Rumania, France and many other countries. The March issue of 1966 acquainted the reader with the almost forgotten play *Boitre* by the popular poet, writer and playwright Moisei Kulbak. In May, on the fiftieth anniversary of Sholem-Aleichem's death, it published the play *The Young Sholem-Aleichem* by the late Nokhem Oislender.

A series of articles of literary criticism appeared by

Riva Rubin, Grigory Remenik, Moisei Notovich, Yakov Shternberg, Israel Serebryany, Khaim Loitsker and others.

The magazine does not confine itself to making the reader familiar with the works of Jewish prose-writers and poets alone. It also contains works by Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Moldavian, Lithuanian, and Chuvash writers.

*Sovietish Heimland* also makes space available to Jewish writers who live outside the Soviet Union.

There are also books published in Yiddish, for example the excellently printed one-volume editions of Mendele Moikher-Sforim, Sholem-Aleichem and Perels, and also the selected stories of David Bergelson and a collection of poems by Osher Shvartsman.

An important event in Soviet literary life was the publication of an anthology of modern Jewish verse which includes the works of 50 poets. Another book came out at the same time—*That's How We Live*—a collection of nineteen documentary feature articles by Jewish writers. Then there were separate editions of novels by Elli Shekhtman and Note Lurye and of a book of poems by Moisei Teif. The Novosti Press Agency Publishing House and the Polish Yiddish Bukh Publishing house jointly published in Yiddish Maria Rolnikaite's diary *I Must Tell*, reminiscent of that of Anna Frank.

Throughout the years of Soviet power the works of Jewish writers have been translated into Russian and other languages of the peoples of the USSR and such work has been particularly intensive over the last ten years. During this period more than 300 books have been translated into Russian and other languages of the peoples of the USSR in a total print of about 30 million.

Besides the works of Jewish Soviet writers the following translations from Hebrew, Yiddish and Arabic were published in Moscow: a collection of stories by 24 Israeli



writers (1965) and a book of short novels by 20 Israeli writers (1966). A collection of selected works of the prominent Israeli poet Alexander Pen was also produced. A Russian translation has appeared of an anthology of contemporary Israeli verse in which 20 poets of various trends are represented.

Among the translated works Sholem-Aleichem's books take first place—in the past ten years over three and a half million copies of his works have been published. Sholem-Aleichem's daughter, Maria Goldberg, who visited the Soviet Union in 1966, said: "I was deeply touched to see everywhere signs of virtually universal love for my father. As regards the size of the editions of Russian translations of his works—these are really fantastic."

In 1966 the Soviet people marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the great writer. Commemoration events dedicated to his life and work took place in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Vilnius, Riga, Chernovtsy and many other cities. A memorial plaque was put up on the wall of the house in Kiev where the writer had lived. By decision of the City Soviet one of the streets in the Ukrainian capital was named after Sholem-Aleichem. There are also streets in other towns of the USSR which bear the name of the great Jewish classic.

On this occasion the New York Jewish newspaper *Morning Freiheit* wrote in its issue of July 31, 1966: "Sholom-Aleichem Street in Kiev! What about New York? In New York hundreds of thousands of people came to pay their last tribute to him. Yet there is no sign in New York of the great role this city played in Sholem-Aleichem's life. There is no plaque on 968th Street in Bronx where the writer lived. Nor is there any street in New York named after Sholem-Aleichem. How is all this to be explained?"

The life of the Jewish people is depicted in various

ways in Russian literature. Let us recall the revolutionary Rachel in Gorky's play *Vassa Zheleznova*, Levenson, hero of the Civil War, in Fadeyev's *The Rout*, Commissar Kogan in Bagritsky's poem *Meditations on Opanas*, Anna Kogutko in Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*, the characters in Babel's works, Dmitry Kedrin's poem about Girsh Lekert who shot dead the Governor of Vilnius, *The Storm* by Ehrenburg and his memoirs *People, Years, Life*. Recently the Moscow magazine *Znamya* published a novel by Andrei Klyonov, part of which is entirely devoted to the 9th Fort and the Kaunas ghetto. A noteworthy literary event of 1966, in my opinion, was the appearance of the documentary novel *Babiy Yar* by Kuznetsov. Jewish characters—war heroes and peaceful working people—are encountered in the works of Konstantin Paustovsky, Konstantin Simonov, Boris Gorbатов, Sergei Narovchatov, Margarita Aliger, Mikhail Svetlov, Ilya Selvinsky and in many other works by Russian writers.

Jewish themes are close to the hearts of representatives of Russian culture. I recall with pleasure the wonderful *Jewish Melodies* by outstanding Soviet composer Shostakovich, who also composed the music to Evgeni Yevtushenko's poem *Babiy Yar*.

#### THEATRE. PAINTING

In Mayakovskiy Square, in the centre of Moscow, one can often see a bright poste reading: "Tchaikovsky Hall. Folk and modern Jewish songs. Sung by Nechame Lifshitsaite, All-Union Variety Art Competition Laureate." Getting a ticket for one of her concerts is no easy matter.

The standard of performance of Mikhail Alexandrovich, who often sings Jewish folk songs, is considered very high. Music- and song-lovers also appreciate very much the art

of such singers of Jewish songs as Emil Gorovets, Klementina Shermel, Dina Potapovskaya and Zinoviy Shulman.

Many Russian singers include Jewish songs in their programmes. I heard soloist of the Kiev Opera Theatre, People's Artiste of the USSR Nikolai Vorvulyev, giving a brilliant performance of the old Jewish folk song *Dos Pastekhl* ("The Little Shepherd"). The audience would not let him leave the stage. After the concert Vorvulyev said to me, smiling, "My singing of this song is a tribute to Sholem-Aleichem. I'm glad they liked it."

Jewish drama groups and concert groups are very popular.

When the fiftieth anniversary of Sholem-Aleichem's death was marked the drama company directed by Veniamin Shvartser, Merited Artiste of the Russian Federation, staged Sholem-Aleichem's *Tevey the Milkman* and *Big Winnings*.

*Wandering Stars* presented by Anna Guzik's musical comedy group is quite a hit with the public. It is a gay performance in which once again shone the rare talent of this popular veteran Jewish actress.

Recently, in Kiev I went to a performance of the Chernovtsy Jewish actress Sidi Tal. It is almost impossible to describe the feeling in the auditorium as she read the chapter "I Feel So Good—I Am an Orphan" from *The Boy Mott* by Sholem-Aleichem—one of the most poetic characters created by this classic Jewish writer came vividly to life.

Sidi Tal's small group presents musical skits and sketches, and for many years the gifted Kishinev poet and playwright Mottl Saksier has written plays specially for it. The group's performances are always a great success.

Emmanuel Kaminka has won the acclaim of Soviet

audiences for his readings of Sholem-Aleichem in Russian and in Yiddish.

The actors and groups mentioned here do not only play to audiences in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Vilnius, Riga, Kishinev and Birobidjan but also in small towns and villages in almost all the Republics of the country. Jewish songs are also broadcast on the radio.

So far I have been discussing professional actors and singers. But in many Soviet towns there are amateur groups who put on very popular shows. For instance, the Vilnius People's Theatre whose repertoire includes such serious plays as *Gershele Ostropoler*, *Shimele Soroker* and *Tevey the Milkman* gives guest performances in other cities and Republics. In June 1966 the theatre performed in Leningrad. The high standard of both acting and production was impressive. The actors at this theatre are young workers, office employees and students who give their free time to their hobby. There are also Jewish amateur drama groups in Kaunas and Tallinn.

At the end of 1966 the first play staged by the recently set up Jewish amateur drama theatre was put on at the town's Youth House in Kishinev. The company has its own dramatic actors, choir, dance group and musicians and is a splendid ensemble. Enthusiastic reviews of the first-night performance were published by almost all the Kishinev papers.

In the Soviet Union there are also many recordings of Jewish concert art. Recently the Moscow record-producing firm "Melodia" arranged a public hearing of a long-playing record on which two extracts from *Tevey the Milkman* ("Khava" and "Shprintse") had been recorded in Yiddish for the first time. The recording was made by Merited Artiste of the Russian Federation Iosif Kolin. "The new record is superb. Kolin has succeeded in conveying in a

warm, tender, deeply human way the state of mind of Tevye, who has just parted with his beloved daughter Khava," said veteran Jewish actor Zinovy Shulman.

There are many Jewish records on sale now, among them *Freilekhe klezmerim*, *Mamele* and *Du zolst nit gein zu kein andere meidelekh* by Klementina Shermel. Records of classical and modern Jewish songs sung by Nechame Lifshitsaite, Mikhail Alexandrovich, Zinovy Shulman, Emil Gorovets, Klementina Shermel, among others, are in great demand.

Jewish composers Pulver, Yampolsky, Kompaneyets, Shainsky, Sendercy, Kogan, Frenkel, Boyarskaya and Likh-  
tenshtein are producing some excellent work.

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of Sholem-Aleichem's death a display of paintings and graphic art by the Jewish artist Zinovy Tolkachov was arranged in Kiev. The numerous comments written by visitors in Russian, Ukrainian and Yiddish express appreciation and gratitude to the artist.

Nearly 500 works by the Jewish artists Moisei Gorshman and Meier Akselrod were displayed at an extremely well-patronised exhibition in a saloon in Kuznetsky Most in the centre of Moscow.

Paintings by young artist Simon Gruzberg are often exhibited in Lvov and Kiev.

Art-lovers know very well the names of the painters Alexander Tyshler, Girsh Inger, Isaac Grazhutis, Amshei Nurenberg and the sculptor Iosif Chaikov.

### *Hebrew Scholars*

At the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Asian Peoples of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR many rare and ancient manuscripts are preserved. They can hardly be understood by our generation, but in the hands of the scholar the unknown becomes known and adds to our knowledge of the remote past. One such scholar is a Russian woman, Klavdiya Starkova, Professor at the Institute. She has dedicated her life to a study of the history of the Jewish people. Much of her work is devoted to studying the art of the 12th century Jewish poet and philosopher Yehouda Galevi. She has written a monograph about this outstanding poet and philosopher of the early Middle Ages, individual chapters of which have already been published. The sensational discoveries of the last two decades in the region of the Dead Sea also attracted Professor Starkova's attention. They induced her to begin translating and studying some of the discovered scrolls of the Dead Sea.

With her pupil and assistant Anatoly Gazov-Ginzberg Starkova has prepared for publication a catalogue of the Institute's Hebrew manuscripts compiled by Iona Gints-

burg. The first volume includes chapters dealing with Bible manuscripts and interpretations of the scriptures, folklore, rudiments of grammar, lexicography, mathematics and music. This volume will also contain an article by Klavdiya Starkova on the life and work of the compiler of the catalogue Iona Gintsburg, an outstanding scholar and expert on Hebrew, Arabic and Persian. Work on the second volume of the catalogue is nearing completion. It will cover manuscripts on theology and philosophy as well as manuscripts in the Karaite and ancient Hebrew and Persian languages.

Most of the Institute's manuscripts are of the 16-17th centuries but there are also some manuscripts of the 14th, the 13th and even of the 12th centuries, including some that are unique. On the whole the collection reflects the cultural life of the Jewish people over a period of nearly eight centuries. "The catalogue which is being prepared for publication," says Professor Starkova, "will serve as a useful guide for those who are carrying out profound research into various aspects of the development of the Hebrew language, grammar and literature, for those who are interested in the history of the natural sciences, for those who are engaged in the study of Jewish philosophy etc. The basis of our collection consisted of 300 manuscripts collected by the prominent booklover Fridlyand. Later on it was added to by manuscripts from Professor Khvolson's private collection, with Hebrew and Persian manuscripts from Teheran and Bukhara and with materials from Karaite libraries in the Crimea. The total number of manuscripts is well over one thousand."

The Leningrad branch of the Institute is publishing a translation of the most important of the Dead Sea scrolls with a commentary edited by Iosif Amusin, D. Sc. (in history). They make up a substantial volume. Klavdiya

Starkova has translated and annotated the Damascus Document, the Community Statute, the Book of Thanksgiving Hymns, The Words of the Enlightened and the Astrological Document. Now, at the time of writing, the book, in whose preparation Anatoly Gazov-Ginzberg and Greta Demidova also took part, is going to press and will come out in 1967.

In 1965 Assistant-Professor of the Institute Gilel Alexandrov discovered most valuable archive materials concerning the prominent Jewish writers Abraham-Ber Gotliber (1830-92) and Yehouda-Leib Gordon (1811-99).

I should like to say at least some brief words about the work done at Leningrad University. A very important course of lectures is delivered there by Professor Isaac Vinnikov, the universally acknowledged head of the Leningrad school of Semitologists and Hebraists, a linguist and ethnographer of world importance, an expert on the Hebrew, Aramaic, Syrian, Phoenician, Ugaritic and Arabic languages. His lectures on Biblical texts always evoke great interest. Recently, on Professor Vinnikov's initiative, a course in spoken modern Hebrew was included in the curriculum.

Isaac Vinnikov's pupil Gita Gluskina teaches Hebrew grammar at the University and with the students reads Biblical texts containing folklore and also historical and philosophic treatises. Under her guidance students learn to appreciate the beauty of the mediaeval poetry of Yehouda Galevi, of Moses ibn Ezra and Salomon ibn Gabirol and acquaint themselves with the fundamentals of Jewish poetry.

Professor Vinnikov's pupil Greta Demidova teaches students Aramaic (theoretical grammar and reading of prescribed texts). She also conducts lessons in the Hebrew language.



Assistant-Professor Gilel Alexandrov delivers a course of lectures in Jewish history from the most ancient times, and including the period of the Spanish inquisition.

To supervise the graduation papers of its students the Oriental Department of the Leningrad University regularly enlists the assistance of its alumni—Lev Pilsker, senior librarian in the Asian and African Countries Department of the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library and Victor Lebedev, who works in the Library's Manuscripts Department.

## *Freedom of Conscience*

### RABBI LIBERMAN'S "DISCOVERIES"

What is the position of the Jewish religion in the USSR? At first I did not intend to write about this because I know that religion by no means plays an important role in the life of the Jewish population in the USSR. But I was impelled to do so by a report that appeared in some Western newspapers. Rabbi Liberman who had returned from a trip to the Soviet Union in August 1966 made three important discoveries:

1. There are no pogroms in Russia at present.
2. The Soviet Jews are intimidated.
3. In Russia "organized efforts" are being made "to eradicate completely the Jewish religion."

We are indeed very grateful for the first discovery—this is really a breathtaking piece of news.

As for the Jews being intimidated the reader can judge

for himself from the preceding chapters. And in general, why refute Mr. Liberman's fantastic fabrication which, I am convinced, he himself does not believe?

I met him twice in Moscow. We talked about various subjects. Not a word about "fear" or "intimidation" passed his lips. And this is quite understandable—he could not help seeing that the Soviet people, including the Jews, were by no means timid people.

Now about "discovery No. 3." On what is this statement made by Rabbi Liberman based? Twenty two American rabbis, including Mr. Liberman, were present during religious ceremonies and services in synagogues in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and other cities. More than that, no one prevented them from addressing the worshippers. Everywhere the American rabbis were able to see for themselves that the position of the Jewish religion in the USSR differs in no way from that of any other religion. Rabbi Liberman's statement does suggest that he came to the Soviet Union with "discoveries" prepared in advance. So much the worse for these "discoveries."

In the Soviet Union the church is separated from the state. The state does not interfere in religious affairs. Soviet citizens are free to worship as they see fit or to be atheists. This is recorded quite categorically in the Constitution of the USSR.

Religion in the USSR is the absolutely private concern of every individual. In no official document, passport or questionnaire filled in when seeking employment or applying for admission to an educational establishment, etc., is any mention made of religion. The point was not even mentioned in the census blanks during the 1959 census.

What has been said applies to all religions in the same measure and the Jewish religion is no exception.

It is stated in the Italian publication *Jews in the USSR*

that the number of synagogues in the Soviet Union has gone down from 450 in 1956 to 92 in 1966. This is obviously some misunderstanding or just an error. In 1956 this figure was actually mentioned in a UN commission. But there was no such number of synagogues at that time. The figure 450 included all houses of worship—synagogues and minians.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union has nearly one hundred synagogues. They are in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Vilnius, Riga, Kishinev, Tbilisi, Tashkent, Odessa and many other cities. Besides this, in various places, large and small, where religious Jews live there are about 300 minians.

The question may be asked: Does this mean many or few? I find it difficult to answer. I only know that the majority of the Soviet people long ago departed from religion and that this did not in any way come about as a result of administrative measures. The point is that the overwhelming majority of the Soviet people have a materialistic world outlook and not an idealistic outlook. As is known, at the beginning of the October Revolution Moscow had, as they said at the time, "40 times 40" Russian Orthodox churches. Now there are only 44. Moscow had seven synagogues in 1924, now there are four (the central synagogue, one in Maryina Roshcha, one in Cherkizovo and one in Malakhovka). Comparing the figures and taking into account the fact that there are 12-15 times as many Russians in Moscow as Jews it is not hard to draw the conclusion that the position of the Judean religion differs in no way from the position of any other religion.

There is also a departure from religion among Jews living in other countries. Even in Israel, where the pressure of religion on public life is very strong, the majority of

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<sup>1</sup> A minian is a religious gathering of Jews consisting of not less than ten men.

the population, as I was told, do not go to the synagogues. While in Tel-Aviv, I visited a synagogue. There were only old people among those praying. During elections to the knesset (parliament) the religious groupings hardly manage to win 15 per cent of the votes.

In his article "The Jews in the United States Do Without Synagogues" published in the Israeli newspaper *Letzte Nyess* of March 25, 1966 American journalist Boris Smolar wrote that the synagogues in the USA were constantly losing their worshippers. The data of the central synagogue authority show, Mr. Smolar points out, "that in the past three years 3,700 families stopped complying with religious rituals and 1,500 families gave up synagogues on grounds of insufficient interest." Mr. Smolar complains that 80 per cent of the Jewish youth do not receive a "Jewish education."

In one part of London three synagogues had to be closed down—they were constantly empty. In another Jewish community of that city they are trying to attract young people by means of jazz and dances. Some official data can be cited: of the Jewish population throughout the world only 20 per cent are religious.

But I repeat: in the Soviet Union orthodox Jews are given every opportunity to perform their religious ceremonies and rituals. Nor is there any hindrance in observing religious customs. And not only in the religious communities but outside them, too. Let us take this business of baking matzoh as an example. Before each Jewish Passover some people in the West start getting everybody agitated on account of the "unfortunate Jews in the USSR" who are forbidden to eat matzoh. On March 15, 1966, even such a highly-placed person as Senator Jacob K. Javits considered it necessary to make a special statement in the USA Senate. He received an answer then from the representa-

tives of the rabbis and the Jewish communities in the USSR.

"Even three months before Passover," they wrote, "the Jewish communities of Moscow started baking matzoh. Thank God, this year we succeeded in supplying matzoh not only to the worshippers of our synagogues but to all who wanted to have it. . .

"We know also that the baking of matzoh was started long before Passover in Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Riga, Vilnius, Tbilisi, Tashkent, and in many other cities of the USSR.

"Mr. Javits said in the Senate that in the USSR Jews who wish to have matzoh must officially register with the authorities. That is nonsense. The Soviet authorities have nothing to do with the baking of matzoh. It is entirely the business of the worshippers. Taking and handing out orders is the concern of the religious communities and of no one else."

The Moscow central synagogue has a theological school—the Yeshibot. Foreign visitors often wonder why there are so few pupils in it. I asked the principal of the school, Rabbi Levin, why this was so. Letters had been sent, he said, to all the Jewish religious communities of the country requesting them to select young men who wished to study at the Yeshibot.

But the same answer came from everywhere—no young men wanted to study at the school. "What can be done," Rabbi Levin sighed, "young people are drawn to secular knowledge; they are attracted by science and technology and do not want to come to us."

What happened in the family of the Maryina Roshcha synagogue's rabbi is very indicative. His own son did not follow in the footsteps of his father. He became an outstanding Moscow professor of mathematics. His grandson

graduated from the University and also became a scientist-mathematician.

Who is to blame for all this?

The question is sometimes asked: Why has the Judean religion in the USSR no central religious authority? This question may be answered by another one: And does the state prevent this?

It is a matter entirely for the worshippers to decide—they arrange their affairs and orders as they see fit.

There are various false rumours regarding religious literature. But if any of you happen to come to Moscow, drop in to any synagogue and you will see in the cupboards many religious books, from prayer books to unique copies of the Talmud.

The religious calendar (the *luekh*) is published every year. In 1966 5,000 copies were printed in Moscow and 2,000 in Leningrad. So far as I know, a new *sider* (a prayer book) has gone to the printers. Like all purely religious matters the question of publishing prayer books and other religious literature is absolutely and entirely within the competence of the religious community.

A few words about the literature on the Jewish religion published in the USSR. Judging by some reports in Western newspapers one may form the impression that in the Soviet Union attacks are made on the Jewish religion at every step.

No one in the Soviet Union attacks either the Jewish or any other religion. Anti-religious literature in the USSR pursues solely the aim of enlightenment. It expounds the principles of the materialistic outlook and shows the harmful effect of any kind of religion without hurting the feelings of the worshippers.

Soviet anti-religious propaganda is based on scientific

reasons and therefore it does not permit any tendentious or subjective approach to a particular religion, let alone discrimination against any religion.

And so my story has come to an end. Of course, the subject is by no means exhausted. But this was not my purpose. I wanted to describe our life—as it is.



**С. РАБИНОВИЧ**

**Евреи в СССР**

*на английском языке*

Цена 25 коп.





